

PURSUIT

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Florida Blue 
BetterYou

A monthly wellness newsletter from Better You

Attitude of Gratitude

Gratitude is the act of being thankful for what you have in your life that is important to you. For example, you can be grateful for a gift but you can also be thankful for a sunset, a meal, or simply to be alive. During the holiday season, we often take time to reflect on what we are grateful for in our lives. The rest of the year, we may not take time for reflection. We do not need to wait until the holidays to start to practice gratitude and experience its benefits.

There are many great reasons to practice gratitude throughout the year. Here are some potential benefits:

- **Lowered stress** – Stress can be associated with the leading causes of death including cancer and heart disease. Practicing gratitude can reduce stress by helping us cope with daily problems in a new way.
- **Increased optimism** – Studies show that people who practice an attitude of gratitude generally feel more connected to others and are more pleased with their own lives.
- **Increased immunity** – Individuals who are thankful are more likely to have a positive attitude and stress less. This can lead to less illness.
- **Improved relationships** – Studies suggest that being thankful can lead to more happiness in relationships.

Anyone can be grateful and begin to practice gratitude at any time. Gratitude is simple, free, and can be practiced anywhere. Here are a few ideas on how to start now:

- **Gratitude journal** – Each evening before you go to bed, write down one thing you were grateful for that day in a journal. Studies have shown individuals who keep this type of journal are optimistic and enthusiastic about their lives. When you are having a bad day, flip through the pages



for a nice reminder of what you have to be grateful for in your life.

- **Reframe a situation** – Think of how you can view an experience in a different way. You may learn something new. Try to see the positive in an otherwise negative situation.
- **Say thank you** – Write thank you notes when someone does you a favor or helps you out in some way. Give a friendly wave to the person who lets

you in front of him or her in traffic. Say thank you when someone holds the door for you.

- **Random Acts of Kindness** – Do something unexpected for someone. Offer encouragement to co-workers, pay for their coffee, or just smile when you pass them in the hall!

This year, start practicing gratitude now to improve your health and outlook on life!

Resource: WebMD.com

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Finding Time for Fitness

If you're like many people in modern America, you may feel like you are rushing through each day only to repeat the same pattern day after day. You may have noticed that pattern doesn't really include much time for you to take care of your health needs. If you've recognized the need to include physical activity in your daily routine but you're just not sure where it can fit into your busy schedule, or what kind of exercise you can do, you're halfway there.

If you're contemplating starting physical activity then the next logical step is to start planning. Planning is essential to being successful when you do take action and start exercising. This is where you look at potential barriers to starting (or maintaining) an exercise program, and make a plan to overcome them.

Begin by brainstorming and include all ideas; don't discount any of them yet. Pretend for a moment that you have no obstacles (time, responsibilities, energy, etc.), and think about the following scenario:

In a perfect world...

- What type of physical activity would you want to do (walk, run, cycle, swim, weight training, yoga, dance, play a sport, etc.)?

- How much time would you want to spend doing it (number of days each week and for how long)?
- Where would want to go to exercise (outside, your home, at a gym)?
- Would you prefer to be distracted while you exercise (watching TV, listening to music or talking to someone)?
- Would you prefer to exercise with someone that you can interact with directly, or indirectly as part of a group, or do you want to be by yourself?

Look at that schedule and determine where you have any gaps of time, even small gaps of 15 minutes. Now that you see there are some gaps of time during your day, list the obstacles to doing activity during those gaps. Once you've identified the obstacles, determine the ideal solution to overcome those obstacles and then come up with alternatives (a back-up plan). For example:

Need childcare:

- *Ideal solution* - spouse watches kids while you exercise
- *Alternative solutions* - join gym with childcare available; exercise with child; exercise when children are sleeping or otherwise engaged in activity (sports

practice, music lesson, school, etc.)

Too tired:

- *Ideal solution* - more or uninterrupted sleep
- *Alternative solution* - exercise in the morning before the stress of the day zaps your energy; take 10 - 15 minute power walks or climb stairs throughout the day

Prefer to exercise outside but it's too hot:

- *Ideal solution* - exercise in morning or after sunset
- *Alternative solution* - exercise inside using treadmill, bike, weights, or videos in a room with a view

Still not sure what you should do? If you want to make sure you are doing the most effective, tried and true exercises, there is no shortage of workouts available online and on video. The American Council on Exercise, www.acefitness.org, provides an exercise library with lots of resources developed by certified exercise physiologists that can help you structure your routine.

Bringing Wellness Home: Do your children spend too much time in front of a screen?

Spending too much time in front of a TV, computer, or video game can have a negative effect on your child's health. Children who watch a lot of television may make less healthy food choices. Video games, computer or internet, cell phone and other hand-held video devices are fun, but often they result in children not getting enough daily physical activity. If you think your family is spending too much time in front of a screen and not enough time being physically active, here are some things you can do:

- Start by tracking your family's screen time. The goal for screen time is no more than 2 hours a day. Use the "We Can! Screen Time Chart" to make it easier (see the link to the right*).
- Track your family's physical activity. The goal for physical activity for children is at least 60 minutes each day. Physical activity can be done in as little as 10 to 15 minute blocks of time but the total daily goal is 60 minutes.
- Make mealtime family time. Turn off the TV and put away all electronic devices. Focus on one another and this special time to be together!
- Try to have family meals at least two or three times a week. Have the kids help around the kitchen and be a true part of creating the meal.



- Try to be more active over time. Start with small goals and work your way up!
- Give your family other ideas for fun activities to do together, like participating as a family in an active hobby.
- Be a good role model. If you reduce your screen time and move more, your children will too.

*To access the "We Can! Screen Time Chart" visit:

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan/downloads/screen-time-log.pdf>

Resource: NHLBI.nih.gov

Fresh and Healthy Recipe of the month

MY HEALTHY TURNAROUND!

My Healthy Turnaround is a CDC approved diabetes program administered through your local YMCA in South, Northeast, Central and West Coast Florida. The program focuses on losing 5% body weight and increasing physical activity by 150 minutes a week. The program includes weekly sessions with a lifestyle coach in a group setting to learn lifestyle changes that can positively affect the onset, or delay the effects of, diabetes, including:

- Weekly weigh-in, food log, and physical activity tracking;
- How to lose weight through healthy meal planning;
- Understanding food and nutrition labels;
- Diet, exercise and healthy lifestyle changes; and
- Group support and encouragement

To help you stay on track, following the program, there are additional sessions which will be held bi-monthly, then once a month.

Please note: individuals who have already been diagnosed with either Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes do not qualify for this program.

To host an on-site class at your work location, please contact David.Carter@floridablue.com or your local YMCA. If you are interested in enrolling, please call **1-855-237-4106** 9 a.m. - 9 p.m. ET to join a class.

Almond and Apricot Biscotti

This twice-baked cookie is a classic with coffee or tea. The whole wheat and nuts provide the mineral manganese, which helps bone formation, and the antioxidant selenium, which is important for thyroid hormone function. Makes 24 cookies.

Ingredients:

- 3/4 cup whole-wheat (whole-meal) flour
- 3/4 cup all-purpose (plain) flour
- 1/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 tablespoons 1 percent low-fat milk
- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 2 tablespoons dark honey
- 1/2 teaspoon almond extract
- 2/3 cup chopped dried apricots
- 1/4 cup coarsely chopped almonds

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F.
2. In a large bowl, combine the flours, brown sugar and baking powder. Whisk to blend. Add the eggs, milk, canola oil, honey and almond extract. Stir with a wooden spoon until the dough just begins to come together. Add the chopped apricots and almonds. With floured hands, mix until the dough is well blended.
3. Place the dough on a long sheet of plastic wrap and shape by hand into a flattened log 12 inches long, 3 inches wide and about 1 inch high. Lift the plastic wrap to invert the dough onto a nonstick baking sheet. Bake until lightly browned, 25 to 30 minutes. Transfer to another baking sheet to cool for 10 minutes. Leave the oven set at 350 F.
4. Place the cooled log on a cutting board. With a serrated knife, cut crosswise on the diagonal into 24 slices 1/2 inch wide. Arrange the slices, cut-side down, on the baking sheet. Return to the oven and bake until crisp, 15 to 20 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack and let cool completely. Store in an airtight container.

Nutrition: Serving Size 1 cookie. Per serving: Calories 70; Total carbohydrate 11 g; Sugars 3 g; Dietary fiber 1 g; Saturated fat trace; Total fat 2 g; Trans fat 0 g; Cholesterol 15 mg; Monounsaturated fat 1 g; Protein 2 g; Sodium 20 mg

Recipe courtesy of MayoClinic.com



PHOTO COURTESY: MAYOCLINIC.ORG

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